

THE MODERN TYPE OF PAINTED PICTURES

A Layman's Comments

by Everett U. Crosby at Winter Club

Nantucket Island, Mass.

October 11, 1949

Our Winter Club has decided to devote an evening to a discussion of the subject "Modern Art," limited however to modern paintings.

Most of us are retired business executives and professional men, not artists. At this island we are isolated from what is going on in the art world on the continent yet we understand modern art has developed amazingly during our lifetime and we would like to know more about it.

As chairman of the Nantucket Foundation which operates the Kenneth Taylor Galleries I have had to do with the exhibitions by our large group of summertime artists, and have secured loan exhibits from the Metropolitan, Whitney, and Non-Objective Art Galleries of New York, and the National Galleries at Washington. While doing so I observed the increasing number of modern type paintings in these exhibits to which I did not have aversion or dislike as much as an indifference due to ignorance.

I decided to find out what causes such paintings and settled down to a self-imposed course of education during the past two years. This meant putting in a really great amount of time in reading, attending lectures, conferring with my art-world acquaintances, artists, dealers, museum directors and critics.

In so doing, an amount of information has been gathered, a small part of which I am proposing to lay before you this evening, including particularly quotations from people who are supposed to speak with authority, or who are recognized as entitled to an informed opinion. Their statements are most divergent and are purposely gathered to voice opposite sides of this controversial subject.

No special merit or skill is claimed for this searching. Many laymen could do the same thing but few will. What we find to read on the subject is largely from art professionals, partisans and devotees, and you will observe they are usually completely prejudiced. It may be expected that the lay person who will give serious attention to the subject will arrive at conclusions different from the professionals. This would seem probable as their premises, experiences and objectives are not the same.

THE HANCOCK FOUNDATION

A Layman's Foundation

By Everett U. Crosby at Winter Club

Hancock Island, Mass.

October 11, 1949

Our Winter Club has decided to devote an evening to a discussion of the subject "Modern Art," limited however to painting.

Most of us are retired business executives and professionals, men, not artists. At this island we are isolated from what is going on in the art world on the continent yet we understand modern art has developed amazingly during our lifetime and we would like to know more about it.

As chairman of the Hancock Foundation which operates the Kenneth Taylor Galleries I have had to do with the exhibition of a large group of commercial artists, and have secured loan artists from the Metropolitan, Whitney, and War-Corcoran Galleries of New York, and the National Galleries at Washington. While doing so I observed the increasing number of modern type paintings in these exhibits to which I did not have access or dislike as much as an indifference due to ignorance.

I decided to find out what causes such paintings and applied them to a self-imposed course of education during the past two years. This meant putting in a fairly great amount of time in reading, attending lectures, conferring with my secretary, assistants, artists, dealers, museum directors and critics.

In so doing, an amount of information has been gathered, a small part of which I am proposing to lay before you this evening, including particularly questions from people who are supposed to speak with authority, or who are recognized as entitled to an informed opinion. Their statements are more divergent and are purposely gathered to voice opposite sides of this controversial subject.

No special merit or skill is claimed for this recital. Any layman could do the same thing but he will find it hard to read on the subject as largely from art professionals, artists and devotees, and you will observe that the lay person is completely excluded. It may be expected that the lay person will give serious attention to the subject will arrive at conclusions different from the professionals. This would seem probable as their premises, experiences and objectives are not the same.

As to the word "modern." To most of us it means current, new, as of now; yet the phrase "Modern Art" as in general use, covers a wide range of art and of time. To clarify this, attempts have been made to speak of the type of paintings as "modernistic." But this word was found to be generally regarded as offensive by the artists so we usually say "modern type," or use the word "modern" to refer to that type.

Modern art is much employed in designing of furniture, furnishings, fabrics, wall papers, utensils and ceramics, also in advertising and architecture, as well as in paintings and sculpture.

The modern type paintings in which we are here interested are the radically developing types which came into being during the past fifty to seventy-five years, and which followed the immediately preceding realistic or representational paintings. In other words, such modern paintings as are definitely non-objective or abstract, or which employ extreme distortion, displacement or grotesqueness; such as are usually without meaning to a viewer of general intelligence who is a layman, not an artist.

Before we get to the chief matter of this talk let me attempt to make clear to you that this subject is complex, that one cannot become familiar with it quickly or, if he is so inclined, brush it off with caustic criticism, or by a mere shrug. To this end please glance at the following vocabulary of a young Gallery visitor as she recorded it to take up with her art class teacher at home. Obviously the list does not relate to modern art only.

VOCABULARY:

Absolutism	Flatness	Misplacement	Purism
Abstractism	Form	Montage	Primitivism
Academism	Futurism	Naturalism	Realism
Associationism	Geometric Balance	Neo-classicism	Rhythm
Automatism	Hallucination	Neo-plasticism	Romanticism
Classicism	Hidden Meanings	Negroism	Significant Form
Collage	Hollowed-out-canvas	Neo-surrealism	Suprematism
Constructions	Illustrationism	Non-objective	Symbolism
Cubism	Impressionism	Nihilism	Spacial
Dadaism	Line	Orchestration	Surrealism
Distortion	Linear rhythms	Pretty	Sentimentalism
Expressionism	Magic	Plastic	Synchronism
Feeling	Mature art	Planes	Texture
Fauvism	Modernism	Pointillism	Volumes
Figure Arrangement	Modeling	Post-impressionism	

BOOKS on Modern Art. The following list is chosen from my library. It is more than enough for a comprehensive reading of the subject. There is no "best" one or two of the lot. For a good cross-section of opinion you might read those with an asterisk, but it can be said that as good a list can be selected from the other titles.

- *"Art Now" by Herbert Read, 1948.
The theory of modern painting by an English authority.
- "Picasso" by Jaime Sabartes, 1948.
An intimate portrait by a Spanish friend.
- "Painting and Painters" by Lionello Venturi, 1948.
How to look at a picture.
- "Vision and Design" by Roger Fry, reprinted 1947.
Writing on art by former curator of Metropolitan Museum.
- *"Twilight of Painting" by R. H. Ives-Gammell, 1946.
Analysis of recent trends.
- "Dali" by Salvador Dali, 1948.
Fifty secrets.
- "Peintres du XX^e Siecle" by Maurice Raynal, 1947.
Skira, editor. Magnificent color prints.
- *"The History of Modern Painting" by Maurice Raynal -- Albert Skira, publisher, 1949 and later.
Superior color prints.
- "Art as Experience" by John Dewey, 1934.
Philosophy of Art.
- "The Art Spirit" by Robert Henri, 1923-1939.
Concepts and techniques.
- "An Approach to Modern Painting" by Morris Davidson of New York and Provincetown. 1948.
- "Mona Lisa's Mustache" by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbins, 1947.
More serious than the title indicates.
- "Outline of English Painting" by R. H. Wilenski, the British Art Critic. 1948.
- *"Modern French Painters" by R. H. Wilenski.
- "The Taste of Angels" by Francis Henry Taylor, Director of Metropolitan Museum. 1948.
Historical review.
- "The Art in Painting" by Albert C. Barnes. 1925-1937.
How to understand and appreciate paintings. Dr. Barnes is a basic authority.
- "What is Modern Painting?" by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1943.

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*"Kandinsky" by Hilla Rebay of Guggenheim Foundation. 1945.

"Non-Objective Paintings" 1938.

Catalogue of Guggenheim Foundation Exhibit.

"Layman's Guide to Modern Art" by Mary C. Rathbun and
Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr. 1949.

"Retreat from Likeness in the Theory of Painting" by
Frances Bradshaw Blanchard, 2nd edition 1949.

*"The Story of Modern Art" by Sheldon Cheney.

*"Modern Art and Dignity of Man" by Francis Henry Taylor,
Director of Metropolitan Museum, New York.

"Essays on Beauty and Art" by Santayana.

"Intimate Journals of Paul Gauguin" 1921.

HISTORY

Very briefly I should first mention the past of picture painting, from which contemporary modern type painting has emerged.

There is no reason, as I see it, in going back to prehistoric sources, to old Chinese paintings, or the classic arts. It is rather the paintings of Europe, from about 300 years ago, particularly those of the Italians and Flemish. This includes the great period of religious paintings, and that of the Renaissance. In due course there developed schools of genre and of landscape painting.

This brings us up to the time throughout the last half of the 19th century when a rebellion exploded (this does not seem too forceful language) and the new types, trends and schools began to come into being.

Up to that time the painting had been consistently objective and usually with effort to be realistic. The idea was to faithfully represent the subject in the painted picture, in doing which the artists' skills and tastes varied greatly. Referring to that current about 1850, and for some time before, there was little inspiration in a majority of it, much of which has been correctly spoken of as "pretty," "romantic," "sentimental," "photographic."

It was about 1870 that Cezanne developed his painting thoughts and technique in a new and different manner, and he has been generally accepted as the founding master artist of modern type paintings. It was in the last quarter of the 19th century, and the first of the following, that these modern types came into prominence. Cezanne, during a long life, painted in many different styles. He was forever searching for qualities of form but he was not a theorist. It was left to others to expound the basic qualifications of his work.

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fications of his work.

It would seem almost as though the first consideration in the modern art movement was the getting away from the older art, discovering where to go, what to do. It was found to be to paint what the eye sees, transformed by feeling, namely by mind and spirit, so that a distinctive feature in much of modern painting has been the demonstration of forces: those of nature and human forces (emotions). This meant a lessening of the showing of the object and more a showing of the feeling the artist developed from viewing the object.

The objects in such paintings were obvious or only suggested. But in the more advanced or later schools of abstract, or non-objective painting, the objects were suggested vaguely or not at all.

Furthermore, there was painting without models or objects, the artist being inspired only by his subconscious, with various artists at times claiming to have no conscious knowledge of what they were painting.

OBJECTIVES

All this being so, then what of it? Why such pictures? What is their reason for being, always, so far as we are concerned, from the lay viewpoint?

Artists seldom make these paintings solely for their own relief or pleasure. They are intended to be shown to others and purchased by the public. Then what is the justification for paintings which are without meaning and confusing to the public? Perhaps one answer is that there are always a few people who will detect a meaning, and others who by studying will find an interest which they did not sense at first.

There are other less worthy reasons, such as inducing the public through propaganda and sales talk to profess an understanding or appreciation even if they do not feel it. There is no doubt a great amount of pretense of this type which temporarily makes for sales, and shortly or ultimately for the attic, for the many paintings which do not have the genuine artistic elements.

It was against the Neo-classic, Romantic, and Realistic that the revolt started, growing into a diversified period very loosely described as Impressionistic.

The different new vogues or styles or schools of painting followed one after the other, and coincided or overlapped in the rapidly developing modern art era.

Impressionism is a term which is broadly applied to many painting types which followed the romantic and academic styles. The word was first used by a journalist viewing a picture titled "Impressions" by Claude Monet at an exhibition in 1863. Used in derision it was quickly generally adopted to cover a wide range of developing styles or techniques over a long period - in fact, up to the present day. Conspicuous among the artists in the

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earlier groups were Manet, Degas, Cezanne, Renoir, Monet, Pissarro. They were not organized in any school and varied greatly in their conceptions but they considered they were struggling for liberty in art.

After a while Cezanne separated from the group and developed his technique and theories. His painting has subtle meaning, part of which I can not understand. While "Cezanne developed as a Post-Impressionist, Renoir returned to his Realism, but with superior command of voluptuous color."

Another change in the French modern art movement occurred around 1905 when a group of artists revolted from all rules and regulations, including those of Impressionism, and declared themselves free in all particulars. They not only did not conceive the objects which they were to paint as real or as changed by their particular viewing of them but they wished to regard them only as a "starting point" in their conception of the painting which then could contain the objects in whole or part, or be entirely omitted.

They studied the paintings of old civilizations, the African negro arts, the drawings by young children and insane adults. They sought the primitive. These influences, with their attendant results, were forever changing.

In due course a movement (Cubism) came in, converting objects to geometrical figures. Braque and Picasso were founders of this type.

During the whole period there was much experimenting. Scientific developments in knowledge of color and light were made use of and the results remain as a permanent benefit to art. Pictures which did not employ perspective or light with shadow were radically different.

Futurism, symbolism, dadaism, surrealism, and other isms followed rapidly. There were attempts by some to express thoughts and emotions without relation to reason or realism and to paint from the subconscious mind without knowing what was to result. Emphasis by the artist and concentration of attention by the observer were striven for by exaggeration, distortion and misplacement.

Vogues changed rapidly. What was new yesterday might cease to be so today. Strange movements and eccentricities particularly appealed to youthful painters. Some of the recognized new-type masters have shifted through the years from one style to another, forward and backward. Observe Cezanne's early and late periods. Picasso, Matisse, Braque are recognized masters of modern art whose styles varied through the years.

QUOTATIONS FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS AND ARTISTS, which are favorable to or descriptive of modern art, constitute most of the immediately following paragraphs, after which will be grouped adverse quotations.

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POST IMPRESSIONISM "This word was first used in London in 1911 at an exhibition of the work of Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin. It is somewhat synonymous with Expressionism. In it the artist slighted or disregarded his picturing of nature and tried to emphasize his inward feelings which at times had a spiritual quality. He attempted to do this at times by distorting nature."

SURREALISM "Surrealism believes that there are hidden springs in the unconscious and that these can be tapped if we give our imagination free rein - if we allow thought to be automatic. It might be called a disintegration of the intellect or reason. To him (the artist) life exists on two planes, one definite and visible in outline and detail, the other - perhaps the greater part of life - submerged, vague, indeterminate. He aims to realize characteristics of his submerged being and to do this resorts to the imagery of dreams, dream-like states of mind. They are haunted, bored with life. They may snatch things from the security of normal existence and put them where they have never been before except in dreams."
-Herbert Read.

"The time is at hand for the systematisation of confusion - the total discrediting of the world of reality. This is to be achieved by reliance on the illogical and unpredictable nature of dream imagery. The painter will paint natural objects with great care but will never bring together objects which are normally seen together. He will seek to bring about the most unexpected, the most shocking and awe-inspiring encounters between contrary images. As beautiful as the unexpected meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella."
-Dali.

ABSTRACT PAINTING This is one of the late developments and is non-representational, employing lines and colors not to represent things but to express thoughts of the artist, often in geometrical forms. Yet the word Abstraction indicates something taken away from something else and presupposes the existence of objects which are not disclosed but cause the thoughts. Picasso evolved the art through analysis of the visible into planes, tensions and repetitions.

NON-OBJECTIVE PAINTING This is one of the last of the developed schools in modern painting.

Hilla Rebay states: "It represents no known object or subject but is a beautiful organization, arranged in rhythmic order of colors and forms and to be enjoyed for beauty's sake. It can entertain the soul of those receptive to beauty itself. It is not easy at first for most people to give up the easy intellectual entertainment expected from objective paintings and for some is as impossible as for others to love music.

"The art consists in the faculty of inventing motifs and harmonies and composing and ordering them into a rhythmic masterpiece.

"The important thing in a creative non-representational picture is the life of its inner rhythm, not cubes or circles. Once we forget to look for objects, meanings, and technique, the beauty of color and the relationships of different motifs speak to us.

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"Kandinsky introduced the art in 1911 and was followed shortly after by Bauer."

THE ART OF NON-OBJECTIVE PAINTING From the official records of the Soviet Government, Moscow, 1919. Later the Soviets condemned modern art.

"This is a new movement. Fundamentally it is a protest of the spirit against the materialism of contemporary life. It is a struggle against the domination of the subject and objective depiction. Having discarded the pictorial and narrative description of the subject, this new art was obliged to compensate by preoccupation with the quality of the work.

"Leaving behind the temporary findings of futurism and cubism, by way of succession Non-Objective art represents the lawful and logical deduction from previous stages of creative work.

"The observer must understand this art through the senses, freshly and intuitively, as a novel form of beauty.

"In non-objective art you will not find anything you are accustomed to, anything familiar or 'understandable' in the old hackneyed sense; you must approach it with new eyes, not only to investigate and study it, not only to seek for some evident subject or the elaboration of descriptive art, but to learn to love this art for itself, to feel it and live in it.

"at present, non-objective art is still but the beginning of a new epoch of great, unprecedented development of creative art, destined to fling open the door into a world of mysteries vaster than those known to science and mechanics. It should also be mentioned here, that non-objective art, unlike its ancestors-in-art, has not evolved a doctrinal system of its own. And it is very possible that it never will, being too vast in its scope and possessing as it does, limitless possibilities of ever new and greater achievements."

SUPREMATISM "It compresses all of painting into a black square on a white canvas. I did not have to invent anything. It was the absolute night I felt in me; in that, I perceived the creation, and it I called suprematism. It expresses itself in the black plane in the form of a square."
-Malevitch.

THE DIVINE ARTIST "People forget that the artist (if he deserves that name) has the acutest sense of us all. We are without courage, freedom, passion and joy if we refuse to follow where he leads."
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Oscar Wilde, whose wife was an ardent follower of Madame Blavatsky, announced that "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life. A color sense is more important in the development of the individual than a sense of right and wrong. The artist is a more divine type than the Saint." And, regarding the new mysticism, stated: "Science can never grapple with the irrational. That is why it has no future before it in the world!"

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"At present, non-objective art is still but the beginning of a new epoch of great, unprecedented development of creative art, destined to bring open the door into a world of mysteries vaster than those known to science and mechanics. It should also be mentioned here, that non-objective art, unlike its ancestors-in-art, has not evolved a doctrinal system of its own. And it is very possible that it never will, being too vast in its scope and possessing as it does, limitless possibilities of ever new and greater achievements."

SUPREMATISM "It compresses all of painting into a black square on a white canvas. I did not have to invent anything. It was the absolute right I felt in me; in that, I perceived the creation and it I called suprematism. It expresses itself in the black plane in the form of a square." -Malevich.

THE DIVINE ARTIST "People forget that the artist (if he deserves that name) has the acutest sense of us all. We are without courage, freedom, passion and joy if we refuse to follow where he leads." -Herbert Read.

Oskar Wilde, whose wife was an ardent follower of Madame Blavatsky, announced that "life imitates art far more than art imitates life. A color sense is more important in the development of the individual than a sense of right and wrong. The art that is a more divine type than the saint." And, regarding the new mysticism, stated: "Science can never grapple with the irrational. That is why it has no future before it in the world."

"Art is not beautification, nor design, nor careful planning, nor good taste. Such facilities must be swept aside to avoid flattering democratic man into the belief that he is the equal, esthetically of artists."
-Morris Davidson.

PLASTIC Generally speaking, "plastic" which from its derivation means molded, in painting is usually thought to indicate volumes instead of flat patterns.

But as Davidson states in the following there is more than this meant by plastic.

"A work in which a bulging form has no meaning without its concomitant hollow space, is termed plastic. It is the interrelationship that determines the presence or absence of plasticity, not merely the illusion of the third dimension. The intensification of contrasts between convex and concave is, however, not the only element of plasticity. Another important element is the design (pattern) relationships that cause the eye to move from one pattern to another, each area a point of reference for another. There must be a constant interplay of convex, concave, and flat areas in inventive relationship if the work is to be plastic."

DISTORTION By taking a well-known object and distorting it in his painting, the artist may believe he has used a new form from which is necessary to express his aesthetic feeling. The distortion of the negroes in Africa and natives in the South Seas was seized upon by many European moderns who began to distort the objects they painted in their home land. The desired effect was secured if the observers were moved, irritated or frightened by the distortions and they were told that the mysterious visions of the artist were apt to be incomprehensible to many spectators.

"Expressive statement in painting and drawing necessarily involves distortion.

"But even where the nature of the imagination is plastic and not literary, as in the painting of nudes where we assume that form or design, not obscene art and lewdness, is the *raison d'etre*, distortion is essential for the unity of the concept.

"Too many self-styled 'modern' painters appear to believe that wild exaggeration of appearance constitutes distortion. They are not interested essentially in the art of painting - an art of relationships, weights, tensions, volumes, rhythms, etc. The true painter uses distortion to express the felt reality of a situation instead of giving a mechanical recording of appearance.

"We see from these examples that art as expression is motivated by different impulses from reporting or conveying factual information. The artist sees what everyone sees, but when his seeing touches his esthetic sensibilities he puts down either an abstract statement or an exaggeration or a distortion of the thing seen in order to express some feeling that the seeing aroused in him."

- "An Approach to Modern Painting" - Davidson.

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DISPLACEMENT Besides the use of distortion, displacements were resorted to by artists so that a mouth might be shown where an ear would be expected, or a leg in place of an arm. Opaque objects were shown as transparent. Some of this, we are told, is rhythmic or musical, some four dimensional.

MYSTERY - The source of art.

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed. This insight into the mystery of life, coupled though it be with fear, has given rise to religion. To know that what is impenetrable really exists, manifests itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull sense can comprehend - in their most primitive forms - this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiousness."

-Albert Einstein.

"When I am in doubt about spelling, my handwriting becomes illegible. How many people use this stratagem in painting - when the drawing and colour embarrass them."

-Gauguin.

HIDDEN MEANINGS They are obscure and impossible to accurately define in imaginative paintings. It can be as much, or even more so with music. The viewer of a picture, or a listener to music, is bound to have his own understanding or reaction which may be much the same, or quite different from what the author had in mind.

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"Do not copy too much of nature. Art is an abstraction, arrived at by indulging in dreams in the presence of nature; consider more the creation than the result." "In painting, as in music, one must search rather for suggestion than for description. People sometimes reproach me for being incomprehensible; that is because they look for the explicative side of my painting which does not exist."

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"art, in proportion to the greatness of the artist, communicates, always through the eye, realities that are vital to the soul, realities that liberate, expand, rejoice, and awe. These realities dwell behind the surface of material fact presented us by nature, and are discovered and communicated only by the dissolving and recreating mind. But in visible shape and colour they can be presented, through the invention of rhythm in line, harmony in colour, and by draughtsmanship which emphasizes certain things, to communicate the sense of motion, force, weight, resistance, and aspiration. What, in the visible world, can express these ideas in the most naked and direct terms? Shapes of elements: the running lines of water, the searing lines of fire, the inert mass of stony earth; above all, the naked human body, the portrayal of which, in its numberless gestures and attitudes of effort or endurance, moves us in corresponding fashion, with nearer and more subtle sympathy than any other thing."

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Ben Nicholson, contemporary English abstract painter, whose work the public is apt to consider as that of a brilliant mathematician or a deep metaphysical thinker, states:

"People are too sophisticated about art, they look for hidden meanings. The fact is, my six children laugh at my knowledge of mathematics and I know nothing at all about metaphysics. A painter should paint, not theorize. Of course, it is interesting when a really intelligent man comes along and explains to you what you have been doing."

HALLUCINATION "My painting is always conceived in a state of hallucination created by a shock either objective or subjective, of which I am utterly irresponsible." "As to my means of expression, I strive to attain more than ever the maximum of clarity, power, and plastic drive, first to create a physical reaction, then to reach the soul."
-Miro.

NIHILISM This word is defined as "total disbelief in religion, moral principles, obligations, established laws and institutions."

Some modern art in various ways and degrees was nihilistic.

"It assumed the destruction of many previous cultural values; many of its master exponents one time or another took such a position. The new art wished to undermine and demoralize middle-class civilization, including its artistic and moral conventions and its ideals of right and beauty. Individuality was to be crushed. Science derided. Also art works of the past. Common sense broken down. Hostility to Christianity preached."

An authority (Andre Breton) stated: "We believe that we are capable of reducing reason and good sense. We feel sympathetic toward revolutionary parties. We do not believe in human progress. We want to support all movements of opposition, violence, at the peril of our lives. I would rather destroy than construct. We are wrathful against present reality."

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CEZANNE "He is reproached by the type of superficial mind bent on following the contour of forms which Cezanne renders only in their mass, and whose incidental character he just ignores to the point of not noticing it."

"Plane, volume and values which determine and fix the colouring, are, in reality, the only 'subject' of his painting. It is useless to search for emotions or intentions in it other than these. That which the public considers a 'subject' - that is to say, some sentimental or picturesque thing that is happening - is to him a dead letter."

"No matter what object occupies his attention, it holds him in so firmly - defined an atmosphere, in one so spare and categorical, that all features, choices and angles of his vision are conditioned by this. It possesses him to the very core."

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"One thinks of the Egyptians, of their merciless subordination of the detail to the mass, of the uneven surface of their planes, of their sinuosity of contour and their nudity of profile. In Cezanne we find the same static power, the same vertical heaviness, the same equilibrium obtained by the simplification of the answer to the query of the problem that was set. All of this constitutes a block, a block composed of strength and harmony, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. Herein lies the unique splendour of his paintings. Compared with them the best contemporary works sometimes appear all too soft, often too weak, seldom on the same level as his radically-conceived transpositions, from which the object stands out, thanks only to its ascetic submission to the spirit of universal form, which, as soberly as can be, it summarizes and condenses. His paintings remain in one's memory as things that are absolutely solid and hard and thick; they are comparable to a smooth sea, a mineral desert, to something that is quite absolute."

-Braun & Cie.

PICASSO He states: "I see for others on canvas the sudden apparitions which force themselves on me. I do not know in advance what I am going to put on the canvas any more than I decide in advance what colors to use. While I work I take no stock of what I am painting on the canvas. Every time I begin a picture I feel as though I were throwing myself into the void. I never know if I shall fall on my feet again. It is only later that I begin to evaluate more exactly the result of my work."

Sam A. Lewisohn said of Picasso: "His abstractions, his symbolism, may have some occult meaning but these can only be read by aesthetic clairvoyants."

Gertrude Stein wrote of him as illuminated as if he wore a halo.

Apolinaire spoke of his pictures as eliciting ecstasy.

Michael Ayrton wrote: "I do not believe that it is possible to create living art out of anything but the direct visual experience of nature, combined with the heritage of a tradition, unless it be by the practice of magic ritual. Since Picasso does not attempt the former, he must be considered in terms of the latter, and considered in these terms his processes of stylistic inversion and formal disintegration are black magic, no more, no less."

FEELING "The imitator is a poor kind of creature. If the man who paints only the tree, or flower, or other surface he sees before him were an artist, the king of artists would be the photographer. It is for the artist to do something beyond this: in portrait painting to put on canvas something more than the face the model wears that one day; to paint the man, in short, as well as his features."
-Whistler.

"As far as I have got now, I see a chance of giving a true impression of what I see not always literally exact, rather never exact, for one sees nature through one's own temperament. And what I am trying to acquire is not to draw a hand but the gesture, not with mathematical correctness a head, but the expression...In short, life."
-Van Gogh, 1886.

"One thinks of the Egyptians, of their merciless subordination of the detail to the mass, of the uneven surface of their planes, of their simplicity of contour and their nudity of profile. In Germany we find the same static power, the same vertical heaviness, the same equilibrium obtained by the simplification of the answer to the query of the problem that was set. All of this constitutes a block, a block composed of strength and harmony, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. Heretofore the unique splendour of his paintings. Compared with them the best contemporary works sometimes appear all too soft, often too weak, seldom on the same level as his radically-conceived compositions, from which the object stands out, thanks only to its astatic and mission to the spirit of universal form, which, as soberly as can be, it summarizes and condenses. His paintings remain in one's memory as things that are absolutely solid and hard and thick; they are comparable to a smooth sea, a mineral desert, to something that is quite absolute."

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I would not paint a face,
A rock, nor brook, nor trees,
Mere semblances of things,
But something more than these.

I would not play a tune
Upon the Shenge nor Lute,
Something that did not sing
Meanings that else were mute.

That Art is best which
To the souls range gives no bound,
Something beside the form,
Something beyond the sound.

-Li Po (705-762)

APOLOGIST Observe the extent to which an earnest advocate of a painter or his picture can go, as in the case of Manet's famous "Les Dejeuner sur L'Herbe" which elicited almost universal censure at first because of his violation of prevailing canons by picturing clothed men in company with nude women. This was regarded as intolerable. An apologist stated: "Evidently the critics overlooked a good still life study in lower corner, and the grace of a far figure which completes an elementary pyramidal composition." And in respect to that even more famous "Olympia," he comments as follows, regarding a typical Parisian kept woman stretched on her bed, nude, except for a neckband, by offering the excuse that the artist had "avoided the idealization of figure and face."

SIGNIFICANT FORM The moderns speak of their search for "significant form." Some attempt to isolate this form by abstract painting, as the cubist and purist. The casual lay observer of a picture is not conscious of this form element. He does not know enough about line, rhythm, space, volume, texture, planes, plasticity or other features which may be in the mind of the accomplished artist.

"Form" seems difficult for artist or commentator to define clearly to the public. It doesn't help when they say: "The artist uses plastic orchestration, that is, he arranges, intermingles, groups, or orchestrates the plastic elements in a way which may not be obvious to an untrained eye." Nor does it help to explain "rhythmic orchestration as harmonious grouping of the rhythms in a manner not understood by the lay person" any more than to say that "the line arrangement constitutes movement from place to place affording a starting point and a way for the observer's eye to travel," or that "the spatial area is used by the artist to relate parts which may result in cosmic wholeness and harmony."

Significant form is said "to get into the painted picture as the result of the aesthetic emotion of the artist, not any ordinary and usual emotion. It is a part of what he feels and he does not necessarily show things observed in nature, for to show what is familiar in things and arrangements is to confuse and detract from or obliterate this other non-representational form."

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IMAGINATION A suggested reaction for one viewing a modern type painting. "Apprehend by the imagination."

"I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the divine arts of Imagination: Imagination, the real and eternal world of which this vegetable universe is but a faint shadow." -William Blake.

"These artists do not seek to give what can, after all, be but a pale reflex of actual appearance, but to arouse the conviction of a new and definite reality. They do not seek to imitate form, but to create Form, not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life. By that I mean that they wish to make images which by the clearness of their logical structure, and by their closely-knit unity of texture, shall appeal to our disinterested and contemplative imagination with something of the same vividness as the things of actual life appeal to our practical activities." -Buchholz Gallery catalogue.

NEUROTIC "Soutine had a great influence upon American painters. Turbulence, excitement, leaped from his brush. Passages of color were swept one over the other in a sort of frenzy. Distortion was, for him, the key to truth. Rich red tones, the bloody parts of slaughtered animals, thrilled him. His landscapes heave as if about to erupt; his figures are masses of jelly. Yet there comes through this work a childlike purity of soul. We are in sympathy with the tormented painter; we are interested in his 'visions'. And the work itself sometimes achieves a quality almost of grandeur by virtue of the rich surfaces caressed and niggled with love." -Davidson.

QUOTATIONS WITH ACCOMPANYING COMMENTS, which now follow, are mostly adverse to modern art.

"There is apt to be a lunatic fringe among votaries of any forward movement." "Primitivism when entered into artificially and deliberately represents only a smirking pose of retrogression ...why a deformed pelvis should be called 'sincere' or a tibia of giraffelike length 'precious' is a question of pathological rather than artistic significance."

-Theodore Roosevelt, after viewing Armory Show, 1913.

INTOLERANCE Why are various modern artists so insistent that they must destroy before they can create. The world is so great; differing things can properly exist at the same time. If there is something new that is worthwhile it can come into being separate from, or alongside of, various things which have preceded.

"Enjoy the art form that is congenial to you.

"To associate truth with beauty brings down the horror and contempt of the intelligensia today. Art by them is made a form of private communication, when it communicates at all, whereby abstract associations of form and color convey more or less cryptic intimacies.

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"The modernists by their insistence of avoiding living forms, and by their dependence upon the ironical and the inconsequential, have substituted reality as the eye sees it for the world of action as the mind perceives it through personal emotion. Each is valid and each circumscribed.

"The one and only quality denied to work of art throughout the ages is privacy. Unless participation is allowed the spectator, it becomes a hopeless riddle.

"If the public must respect the artist's freedom of creation, then in the same way the latter must acknowledge the public's freedom of acceptance or rejection. Any other concept is academic and totalitarian." - "Modern Art and the Dignity of Man" - Taylor

MAGIC "In 1877 Madame Blavatsky appeared on the world scene as a force in a growing belief on the part of certain modern artists that the only effective means of refuting science and of restoring power to artists and poets would be a revival via the arts of mysticism and superstition. Her theories and occult teachings were the basis of a modern German school of painting called Expressionism, of which the leader was Kandinsky.

"The neo-religious and occult experiments of the Nazarenes and Pre-Raphaelites, the necromantic experiments of the symbolists, Madame Blavatsky's archives on magic, and the wave of Asian religions were the earlier ingredients. The medieval occultism, paintings by peasants and children, and the 'magical' distortions of the Polynesian and Negroid magicians discovered by Gauguin and the German artists of Die Brucke came next. Nor must the experiments of the Nabis, translating 'emotions or concepts into the forms to which they correspond' be overlooked. Now spiritualism, the newest form of 'magic' must be added, with its trances, automatic writing, automatic drawing, thought forms, and 'photographs' of abstract forms and figures invisible to mortal eye. All these philosophies, occult beliefs, magics, mysticisms, and supernatural experimentations will now constantly reappear, disguised and rationalized, in the various schools of modern art during the next forty-odd years.

"The new and much discussed theory advanced the idea that the primitive drawings and sculpture were used originally by the witch doctors to produce a state of incantation in the spectator.

"From the early drawings of the cavemen of Dordogne in pre-historic times down to the masks, carvings, and designs of present-day primitive tribes, the carved forms and drawings were created to induce a hypnotic condition in the spectator which works as follows: The grotesque distortions and garish artificial colors, so glaringly abnormal, first riveted the attention and then brought the complete immobilization of the spectator. This fixation of the attention in turn brings on a state of self-hypnosis, in which the normal functioning of the reasoning faculties are suspended, even temporarily destroyed. The spectator is now in a condition that makes him completely receptive to any suggestion embodied in the carving or drawing on which his attention is concentrated.

"The modernists by their insistence of creating living forms, and by their dependence upon the tropical and the tropicalist, have substituted reality as the eye sees it for the world of action as the mind perceives it through personal emotion. Each is valid and each circumscribed."

"The one and only quality denied to work of art throughout the ages is privacy. Unless participation is allowed the spectator, it becomes a hopeless riddle."

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"If he is staring at a mask representing a devil, for instance, so deeply will it be imprinted on his subconscious that when the ritual is over, and though his normal faculties return, he will be absolutely convinced that he actually saw a devil.

"It was now believed by certain groups in Montmartre that by following the identical process of the early magicians a similar hypnotic state might be produced in twentieth-century spectators. The problem was how to evolve a new type of drawing and sculpture, which by its unique distortions and juxtaposing of color would first rivet the spectators' attention. Once this has been accomplished, the artists could then proceed to introduce into the new-style drawing or carving symbols or representations of the various ideas that they wished to hammer into the subconscious mind of the hypnotized spectator.

"Of all the mystic-occult theories, the three most predominant, and the three considered most applicable as new aesthetic dogmas, were the theory of the universe as a clocklike structure in which man is a mechanized automaton; the theory that pure geometry reflected the basic architecture of the universe; and the theory that beyond reality, as it is conceived by reason, was a truer reality, perceived by the senses and by an intuitive vision supposedly highly developed in artists."

-T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbins.

MODERNISTIC ABSURDITIES "The public in large numbers have been looking solemnly at canvasses with clumsily applied daubs of paint and have accepted what they have been told that many of them not discernibly very different from the others are actually fine works of art. Do they find this urge to revere the incomprehensible and give it supernatural significance, a substitute for an element of religion? Certainly justifications for these pictures are frequently couched in the language of an emotional mysticism. It is customary for these modern painters when first coming before the public to be interpreted by one or more writers. And the highfalutin and often incomprehensible verbiage in which these apologies are written has now become familiar to the public.

"Many people are pleased to find it is so easy to paint in this manner.

"Many of the characteristics of contemporary pictures, especially those featured today as strikingly 'interesting' and 'modern' are merely mannerisms resulting from an ignorant misapplication of time-honored principles of painting.

"Art is not acquired intuitively, nor do fine pictures just 'paint themselves'.

"The would-be cultured public has now been indoctrinated with fancy esthetics for so long that they will be reluctant to abandon ideas which make them feel among the initiated. And a vast number of people are so happy in the belief that their own ignorant and incompetent way of painting is a fine art that they will naturally remain averse from accepting any higher standard which would show up their work for what it is.

"The complete deterioration of the older forms of painting is a disaster to civilization."

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SPIRITUAL BREAKDOWN Toynbee speaks of Futurism as a "barren quest, an alluring alibi" which in its tragic climax expresses itself as satanism. "We have wilfully cast out of our souls the great masters who have been the familiar spirits of our forefathers; and while we have been wrapped in self-complacent admiration of the spiritual vacuum that we have created, a tropical African spirit in music and dancing and statuary has made an unholy alliance with a pseudo-Byzantine spirit in painting and bas-reliefs." "The decline is not technical in origin but spiritual. In repudiating our own Western tradition of art and thereby reducing our faculties to a state of inanition and sterility in which they seize upon the exotic and primitive art of Dahomey and Benin as though this were manna in the wilderness, we are confessing before all men that we have forfeited our spiritual birthright. Our abandonment of our traditional artistic technique is manifestly the consequence of some kind of spiritual breakdown in our Western Civilization."

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"As to my education in Modern Art. I began away back in 1907, when I was on vacation in Germany to study the exhibitions of the Modernists. In 1910 I saw the 'Secession' and 'Die Brücke' shows in Munich. In that year at Dresden I visited the memorial exhibition of Gauguin. Also I saw the big Matisse show in Paris in this same pre-war era, and the still bigger exhibition of Brancusi, the sculptor. Likewise I have listened to Modernists for years and tried to follow their thinking. To my mind Modern Art is only one aspect of a disease that has swept over this age. In a word, it is the contempt for standards. This is true in poetry - witness the drivel printed by Gertrude Stein and many others of that group. Witness also the poetry award this year to the traitor Ezra Pound (adjudged a lunatic and placed in an asylum) for what have well been called his 'nauseous Pisan sonnets.' This letting down of ideals of excellence may be seen in our social life, our theatre, our education, where in the name of 'progressivism' discipline is thrown out, both in conduct and in mastery, and in politics there is the absolute negation of all standards of right and individual freedom in both Nazism and Communism. -Dr. William O. Stevens.

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"Art is, in a way, a reflection of the mores of the people. If the people are so shallow and silly as to be taken in by flim-flam, double-talk and cheap deceitfulness, whether it be in the advertising of patent medicines, the talk of politicians, or the expressions of art, there will always be those who will supply their demands. We accept inane and repetitious twaddle over our radios and television sets. We allow the cheapest, most selfish and childish criminal politicians to rule us.

"Thus I prefer to speak, not of ART, but of appeals, for the abstraction does not actually exist, and to define 'it' is impossible. All around us appear thousands of appeals dependant upon our childhood experiences which we have found pleasurable. I certainly do not agree with Mr. Freud, that all of these are sexual; they actually cover all healthy functions of the body such as eating, drinking, bathing, running, even fighting, and perhaps just growing. Most things to do that God equipped us to do we can find pleasurable, and in what we like to call 'beauty' we find a reflection of such pleasurable functions. All any artist or craftsman can do is to create reflections."

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"The man-in-the-street has always had very strong opinions about 'the artist' - a term that once meant simply a painter. In the Middle Ages the artist was considered a sort of bastard cross between a rogue and a saint; and even in the Victorian era, when many artists became very rich, it was taken for granted that art was a romantic way of failing to make both ends meet.

"This has had a bad effect on aspiring artists, who have done their best to live up to the character that has been suggested to them by their elders. They have flocked into garrets like mice and asserted their artistic integrity by becoming as personally dishonest, diseased and impecunious as possible. In a moment of irritation, Mr. Wyndham Lewis has described the majority of them as creatures who spend their lives 'brooding over some midget talent, in some dirty little room, with some dirty little woman.' Other students of the type have found a kinder, more flattering description: the artist, they suggest, is an aristocrat, i.e., one who performs the important double duty of giving society both an object lesson in moral depravity and a tantalizing glimpse into the joys of dissolute abandon.

"The artist is very well pleased with this description of his function; but his opposite number, the businessman, is not. The businessman has never approved of aristocratic behavior, nor has it ever been his custom to applaud tantalizing depravity, except in nightclubs. Consequently, the gap between him and the man of art has become so wide that the two regard each other, particularly in the U.S., as quite separate species of man." -Nigel Dennis.

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Lawrence Dame took to a modern art exhibit a friend of his from Central America who was unfamiliar with contemporary painting and expressed himself as somewhat dazed and shocked by it all. The friend said: "It looks to me as though these painters are pretty good at handling color and, when they want to, they can draw. But if this is beauty I don't know an orchid from an ocelot. If this shows the spirit of American youth today, then that spirit must be pretty low.

"Take what you call religious pictures. There is not the slightest religious feeling in any one of them. There is no faith, no sense of the joy of living and believing.

"If you want me to sum up the whole - and I'm no art critic - the whole thing breathes death and decay."

Reporting this, Dame continues: "I guess most of us who view the aberrations of modern art and the inanities of conservatism get used to them and become less critical than we should be. We fail to see how ridiculous some of these things are and we fail to reflect that the current confusion of mankind under picayune leaders entangled with mighty forces is reflected often in art through lack of faith in the higher spiritual things.

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"The hectic sides of life are stressed without true humanitarian messages such as our elders were capable of perceiving and presenting. There is a great deal of very clever painting. But much of it is shallow with a bottom of technique alone."

THE PERSONALITY OF AN ARTIST IN HIS PICTURE "Pictures and writings are portraits of their authors."
-Gauguin.

It has been much believed that the paintings of a vile artist must reveal his character. I have met and know about such objectionable modern painters and was prepared to react adversely to their work. But now I am prepared to assume that the mind of man is compartmented and he can operate for a time out of one cell, independent of the others. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, as it were. Like a considerable number of the composers of the greatest orchestral music who were in part or at times insane. Therefore, it seems best to estimate a painting without thought of its author, indeed, to consider it better to know and hear nothing about him. This also may be desirable when the painting is executed from the artist's subconscious.

DIFFERENT APPEALS TO THE PUBLIC All of us have to a greater or less extent, beneath the surface, and controlled or concealed by prevailing codes and customs, certain animalistic, and otherwise undesirable qualities that could be quickly appealed to on occasion. It is suggested that to just such qualities certain modern painting appeals and provides an outlet. If the picture is painted in a non-moral, rebellious, sensuous or abortive mood, is it not going to appeal to just such qualities in numbers of observers? Then such pictures will be looked at, sympathetically regarded, and frequently bought by people who have a kindred feeling for them.

There are today serious, modern artists, desiring to express spiritual truth of the inner man who may dismiss from the canvas, the physical world and strive to substitute their interpretations of the soul by modern picturing. To the contrary, there are modern type painters, impressionistic and expressionistic, some of them accepted masters, who nevertheless are clearly representational. Their work has an immediate meaning to any observer. Such were Renoir, Degas, Monet and Manet. Man has always believed in a Divinity. People are religious. No longer are they diffident about showing and talking about it. This is emphasized by occasional personal exceptions, also the attempted control of the thinking and believing of its people by a totalitarian state. This offers by far the greatest field for expression by contemporary painters. Not weird or commercial attempts as now occasionally current but something springing from genuine spiritual belief of the artist.

In Conclusion

You have listened to this review with patience. Doubtless you find it confusing, which is to be expected. Conflict of thought is inherent to considerations of modern art.

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It had been my thought that the above varied quotations would give you enough material to choose from to express an understanding of this subject acceptable to you. But you ask me to state more definitely the conclusions I have come to for myself. Therefore the following is added.

First, I re-emphasize this is not an essay on Modern Paintings, nor an examination of the techniques employed. I should like to go so far as to say it is not primarily about paintings or artists but that its chief concern is the non-artist public. It is not for artists. They live in a different world and talk a different language.

Modern type paintings signify escape, and frequently with personality largely excluded, both that of the artist and in the subject of his painting. This of itself need not be undesirable.

It is felt essential to refrain from conventional representation.

There is a mandate to paint differently.

At times an artist who has something to say succeeds, while others do not. Frequently he has little to say and also succeeds in so doing. This has always been so with any type of painting. We view them all.

This unusualness, of which some part was grotesque, has occasioned endless explanations which brought in new language and expressions which were unintelligible to most of the great non-artist public.

Modern art was a godsend to the dealers, providing quantities of paintings. Before, there was but languid interest in much of what they had for sale. The dealers assisted in developing and carrying on the propaganda but tell me the profit is waning.

The interest in modern paintings by that small per cent of the vast public to whose attention they come, indicates their curiosity, an attempt to keep up temporarily with the modern-art Joneses, a pastime of speculation and expounding as to what it is all about; but little gratification of the soul or intellect. However, an occasional layman has the faculty, and hence the satisfaction, of determining if a painting "is a good painting, aesthetically or according to contemporary standards or vogues of the art world. Whether it is well composed having rhythm, movement, tension, plastic form, balance, solidity and sensitivity."

For this summary I will arbitrarily segregate modern (type) paintings into three groups.

A - The abstract and non objective.

B - Paintings which, in varying degrees, remain representational but without grotesqueness.

C - Those of the latter (B) which employ extreme distortion or displacement.

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This latter group with extreme distortion impress me as grotesque, abnormal, insulting or amusing.

They are done largely to excite attention or comment, in which case they frequently originate from commercial causes or they may be the result of abnormal mentality. Of course distortion of a kind always has been a legitimate part of much painting and is not included in this censure. Similar criticism applies to displacements.

Next, as to the strictly abstract and non-objective types. They are not representational.

Let us assume we are viewing such in the Gallery and that they are without title or catalogue description, and no devotee stands beside us viewing them and ready to explain, perhaps with vocabulary and terms unintelligible to us. In fairness to ourselves and the artist, we may study each painting and endeavor to glean from it some part of the artist's meaning, or if not that then see what we can read into it. Otherwise pass without criticism as not warranted in respect to what we do not understand. In most cases we laymen will "pass." It may be a doodle. It may be an evil expression. It may picture the sublime. We just can not tell.

"Frankly, it is not to be expected the vast public will understand abstract paintings. They can have real appeal to the understanding of only a select group. Those who know the factors of composition and technique that can be found in a mostly abstract or non-objective painting." You and I are not of that group.

The foregoing conclusions do not discuss in detail the great field of semi-objective painting where the artist departs to varying degrees from the representational with the intent of expressing motion or emotion, interesting newness or individuality, or to give pleasure by his drawing or color, but while avoiding offensive grotesqueness. This is my second group which seems to me a continuing field for endless exploration by the modern for his proper gratification, if not for ours.

Modern Art has something in common with the well-known technique of the mystic who through the medium of trance leaves the mundane world behind to explore or be enveloped in the spirit world. Some of these mystics claim that to do so one must abandon "common sense and the reasoning mind." You and I are not apt to be among those who will seriously explore either the spirit world or modern art world, although both pursuits are legitimate.

So let us view or buy those pictures that interest us or give us pleasure according to our own understanding. There is no unchanging standard for taste or morals or final definitions of truth, beauty or goodness.

There is but a small part of modern type painting to which I am able to react with feelings of lasting satisfaction.

There is a certain amount of truth in the statement that the artist is not a passive recorder of what he sees, but an active interpreter of it. The artist's mind is not a blank slate, but a complex of ideas and feelings which are constantly being shaped and reshaped by the world around him. The artist's work is not a mere reflection of reality, but a creative interpretation of it. The artist's work is not a mere record of what he sees, but a creative interpretation of it. The artist's work is not a mere record of what he sees, but a creative interpretation of it.

It is not, as to the strictly abstract and non-objective types, that they are not representational. It is not, as to the strictly abstract and non-objective types, that they are not representational. It is not, as to the strictly abstract and non-objective types, that they are not representational. It is not, as to the strictly abstract and non-objective types, that they are not representational. It is not, as to the strictly abstract and non-objective types, that they are not representational.

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The foregoing considerations do not discuss in detail the great field of semi-objective painting where the artist deals with the things of the world, but the things of the world are not the things of the world. The things of the world are not the things of the world. The things of the world are not the things of the world. The things of the world are not the things of the world. The things of the world are not the things of the world.

Modern Art has something in common with the well-known technique of the mystic who through the medium of images leaves the mundane world behind to explore or to be engulfed in the spirit world. Some of these mystics claim that to do so one must abandon reason and the reasoning mind. "You and I are not apt to do so," say those who will seriously explore either the spirit world or the modern art world, although both pursuits are legitimate.

So let us view or buy those pictures that interest us or give us pleasure according to our own understanding. There is no mechanical standard for taste or morals or final definitions of beauty or goodness.

There is but a small part of modern type painting to which I allude in my book on the history of painting.